

Ask the DJ | Daft Punk

By MICHAEL HAMERSLY

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French electronic pop duo Daft Punk technically aren't DJs -- they actually play their own instruments, including guitar, bass, keyboards and drums, and write all their songs -- but their music will make you dance like you're listening to one. Irresistible hits such as Da Funk, Around the World, One More Time and Digital Love take a trip back to the future by combining robotic vocals with upbeat, warm melodies. Guy-Manuel De Homem-Christo, half of Daft Punk along with Thomas Bangalter, talks about the duo's upcoming gig at the BANG! Music Festival Saturday at Bicentennial Park in Miami.

Q: I heard that BANG! will be Daft Punk's final live performance?

Where did you hear that? That's a rumor I'm not sure how started. It'll be the last of this year, but not the future.

Q: Songs including Digital Love and One More Time make robotic vocals seem incredibly warm and human. Is that close to summing up your musical mission?

I don't know if we have any mission -- just have fun and make music we like to make and we like to hear. But it's true: In general we like to put warmth in our music, and it's a challenge to include the robot-like Vocoder to meld with the music.

Q: Would you say Daft Punk's music is more ironic or sincere? Or both?

I think it's really sincere, that's for sure. Ironic, I'm not sure. Maybe people will think that, about the funny side of songs we make, but it's not ironic. More like a childlike feeling, when you listen to music and you don't put any judgment to what you're listening to. We never theorize or think about the music we make.

Q: Are you and Thomas paying homage to the styles of music you listened to as kids?

We really like The Buggles -- Video Killed the Radio Star was a song we both liked. But we didn't make a list of artists we like and copy their songs.

Q: How did you end up choosing Romanthony to provide the perfect vocal for One More Time?

We met with him maybe eight or nine years ago and we were really big fans of his music and he was kind of an underground figure, known by very few people in France. A friend brought us a Romanthony record -- then we bought all his records. For One More Time, we thought the funkiness of his voice fit the funkiness of the music.

Q: Any new releases on the horizon?

No, we just did a movie called Electroma -- that took quite a long time from last year to

this year, and this year we've been touring.

Q: Who plays those crazy Eddie Van Halen guitar riffs in some of your songs?

We can play both parts of any song, but most are synthesizers, sometimes noisier than Eddie Van Halen. Thomas is really more keyboards -- when he was 5 he began to play piano. I can find chords on the piano, but I'm more into guitar and bass and drums.

Q: When writing songs, do you generally start with a riff and add layers to it?

It can be like that, but we can also begin with a sample, we can begin with a drum pattern, a vocal. All the tracks we've made, they've always been different. A sequence of chords. At the end you see continuity but the process is always different.

Q: Do you conceive and produce your own videos?

We produce our own videos, and directed most of them. The more we make music, the more we try to direct them. We love the visual side.

Q: Do you have a favorite?

Not really, but I think we all like the videos from the first album, by Spike Jonze.

Q: Was that actually you and Thomas dancing with Juliette Lewis in the Gap commercial?

Yes! It looks really simple to do, but when you're on a step with all the crew, it's really not, even though the choreographer was very nice. I am not a good dancer.

Q: What can we expect at BANG?

We really, really worked on the music of this show and a lot of the visual side, and we really tried to combine the music and light images in the most powerful way and the most energetic way. I think we tried to make it really intense -- like a punch. It won't be like all our greatest hits because we don't have enough space for them, but there will be most of the hit songs and many new ones -- a mixture, a playful way of blending the tracks together. Maybe One More Time will become Around the World and you'll get lost -- we really paid attention to making something funny and new and playful.